

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/TPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s): _____

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() Classify as _____ () Extend as _____ () Downgrade to _____

Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

3/21/81

Argentina HH
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MARCH 31 1981

Dear Senator Kennedy:

Thank you for your letter of March 19 expressing your concern over the human rights situation in Argentina and asking that Secretary Baig raise these concerns with President-designate Viola and other Argentine officials.

This administration is committed to the protection and promotion worldwide of individual freedoms and legal rights. Through the use of quiet, private diplomacy we have and will continue to pursue this important interest within the context of our overall strategic, hemispheric and security interests.

In Argentina, there have been significant improvements in human rights. There have been no confirmed disappearances this year. The number of persons held by the Executive on other than common criminal charges has been reduced from about 8,000 in 1977 to under 900 today. Greater press and judicial discretion exists. We expect this progress to continue.

The issue of accounting for the disappeared is the most difficult human rights issue facing the Argentine Government today. To the extent that it raises concerns of the military over recriminations and reprisals by a future civilian government, it impedes progress in other important areas such as restoration of due process and return to democratic rule. Over the longer term, we expect the Argentines themselves will resolve this issue. In the interim, we will continue to use our influence privately and in international fora to encourage Argentine officials in their efforts to make information available to the families of missing persons.

We have decided to seek repeal of Section 620B of the Foreign Assistance Act. By imposing blanket restrictions on the sale of military supplies and

The Honorable
Edward M. Kennedy,
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training to Argentina, this legislation inhibits the accomplishment of our strategic objectives in the hemisphere while not permitting recognition of the considerable progress Argentina has made toward the restoration of due process and rule of law. As in countries without restrictive legislation, we intend to utilize existing legislation and control procedures to take into account the full range of U.S. interests.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Fairbanks
Assistant Secretary
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